

# **Assuring Access to High Quality Early Learning for Washington's Young Children: Concepts and Costs**

Presentation to the  
Washington Learns Steering Committee

Human Services Policy Center,  
Evans School of Public Affairs,  
University of Washington

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# Interdisciplinary Project Team

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# Project Objectives:

*Assist the ELC to consider alternative policies that assure all young children in Washington access to high quality early learning opportunities.*

*Analyze tradeoffs: compare the costs, impact on family affordability and targeting of funds, of alternative policy packages.*

*Inform policy with research literature, expert judgment and analysis – but reflect state policy context, values and preferences.*

# Process:

Background Research: multi-disciplinary team.

- Analysis of other US benefit programs.
- Starting point recommendations, based on expert working groups. Lessons from 4 states.

## Policy Simulations:

- ELC specifies policy options, modifying expert rec's to reflect context, preferences.
- HSPC produces two rounds of analysis, feedback.
- WA Learns selects preferred option(s) to promote.

# Milestones

- March: ELC/QRIS-TAC specify Round I options
- June 28<sup>th</sup>: HSPC presents Round I analysis to ELC
- July: ELC modifies specifications, or new options
- August 22<sup>nd</sup>: HSPC presents Round II analysis to ELC
- September 12<sup>th</sup>: HSPC presents Round II analysis to Steering Committee
- October-December: HSPC produces public reports and fact sheets

# Key Concepts and Policy Choices

# Key Conceptual Issues

*Access for all vs. uniform delivery -- choice and diversity.*

*Including middle class vs. target to low income – relative need; economic segregation ?*

*Access = fee vs. free.*

*Schooling vs. Developmental approaches: does every interaction count ?*

*When does learning start – age 6, 4, 2, birth ?*

# Policy Choices: Two Types

*Choices are interrelated:* can reflect cost trade-offs while meeting goals of quality and children's early learning.

- ❑ Quality parameters determine hourly cost to provider of service
- ❑ Financing structure of assistance to families to afford quality determines overall cost



# Special Features of HSPPC Modeling

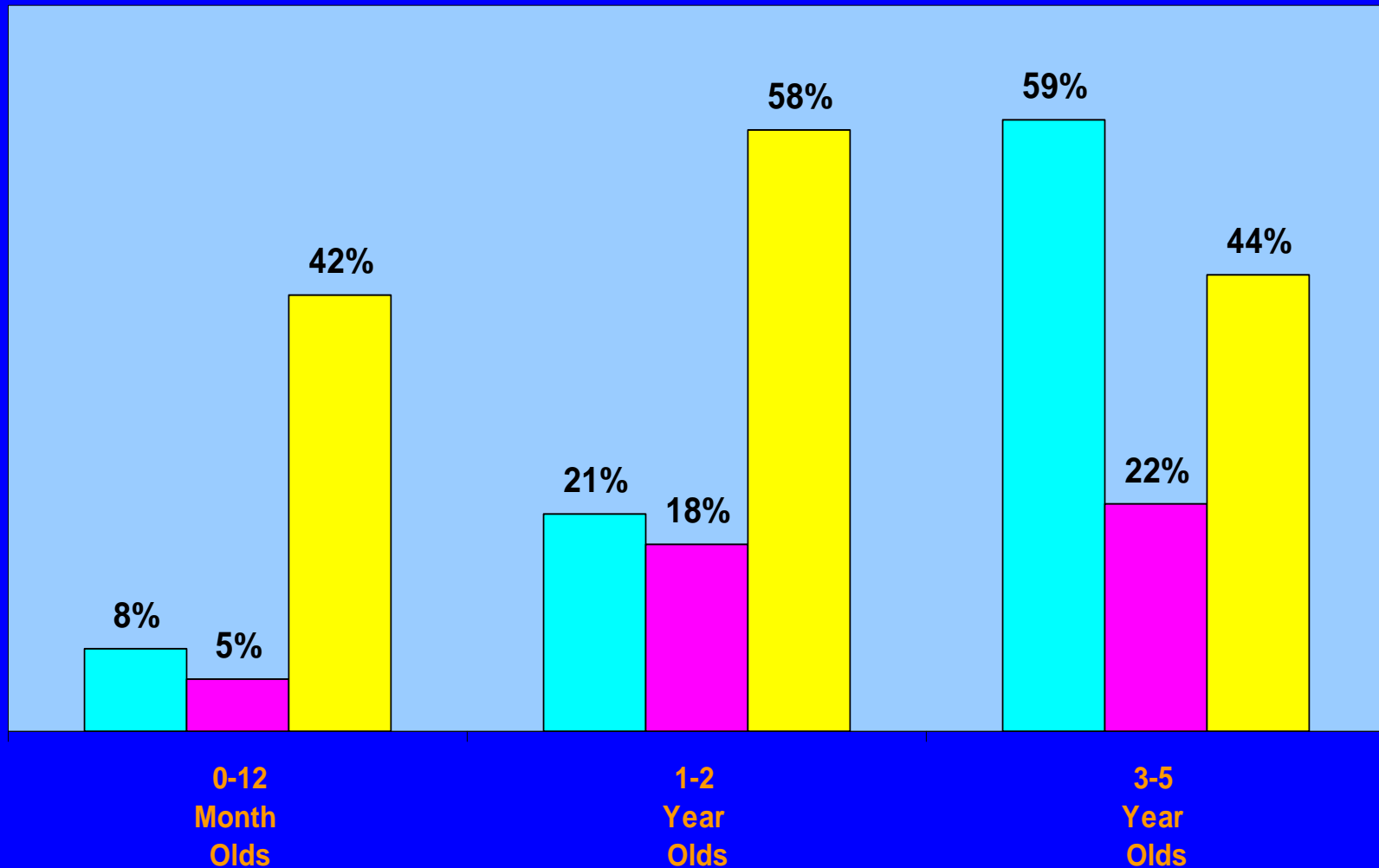
- ❑ Market-based vs. Program
- ❑ Consider all types of care: Center, FCC, FFN and hours used, current and adjusted; based on parent demand survey.
- ❑ Adjust estimates for demand, employment.
- ❑ Include all components of high quality system.
- ❑ Detailed staff specifications: link to QRIS.
- ❑ Vary eligibility criteria, parental co-payments.
- ❑ Potential phase-in from lower to higher cost.

## Percent WA Children Using Each Type of ECE, Based on HSPC Parent Survey

Center, HS or ECEAP Care

FCC

FFN Care



# Key Policy Cost Drivers:

1. What constitutes a learning environment: staff qualifications and compensation; stability and teamwork; professional development; quality assurance; related services. Setting? Siblings together?
2. How many hours-a-day, days-a-year are required ?
3. What share of the population is eligible to participate – is income segregation desirable ? Middle income needs ?
4. How to best balance quality, affordability, budget costs, targeting ? Phasing for feasibility, cost ?

# Hourly High Quality Costs for Center-Based ECE

(Direct service and quality promotion; not admin or SHS)

(\$2003)	Lower Salary Standards (Social.Worker. ~ \$12/hour start )	Higher Salary Standards (Elem.Teacher. ~ \$18/hr start)
Infant	\$ 4 ~ 6	\$ 5 ~ 8
Toddler	\$ 3 ~ 5	\$ 4 ~ 7
Pre-Schooler	\$ 3 ~ 4	\$ 3.5 ~ 5

- Close to 75<sup>th</sup> percentile; much higher than state reimbursement.

# Policies to Assist Parents: Approaches

- ❑ *Current highly targeted to low income. Voucher, Head Start, ECEAP.*
- ❑ *100% Provider subsidy: Head Start, Kindergarten.*
- ❑ *Parent-Provider Assistance Packages: 10-55% provider subsidy + income-related voucher; co-pay <10% income. [Like higher ed].*
- ❑ *Tax credits. Federal and State. Annual vs. monthly*
- ❑ *Parental employment requirements - eliminate?  
-- limits on hours/week?*

Middle Income Affordability

Vs.

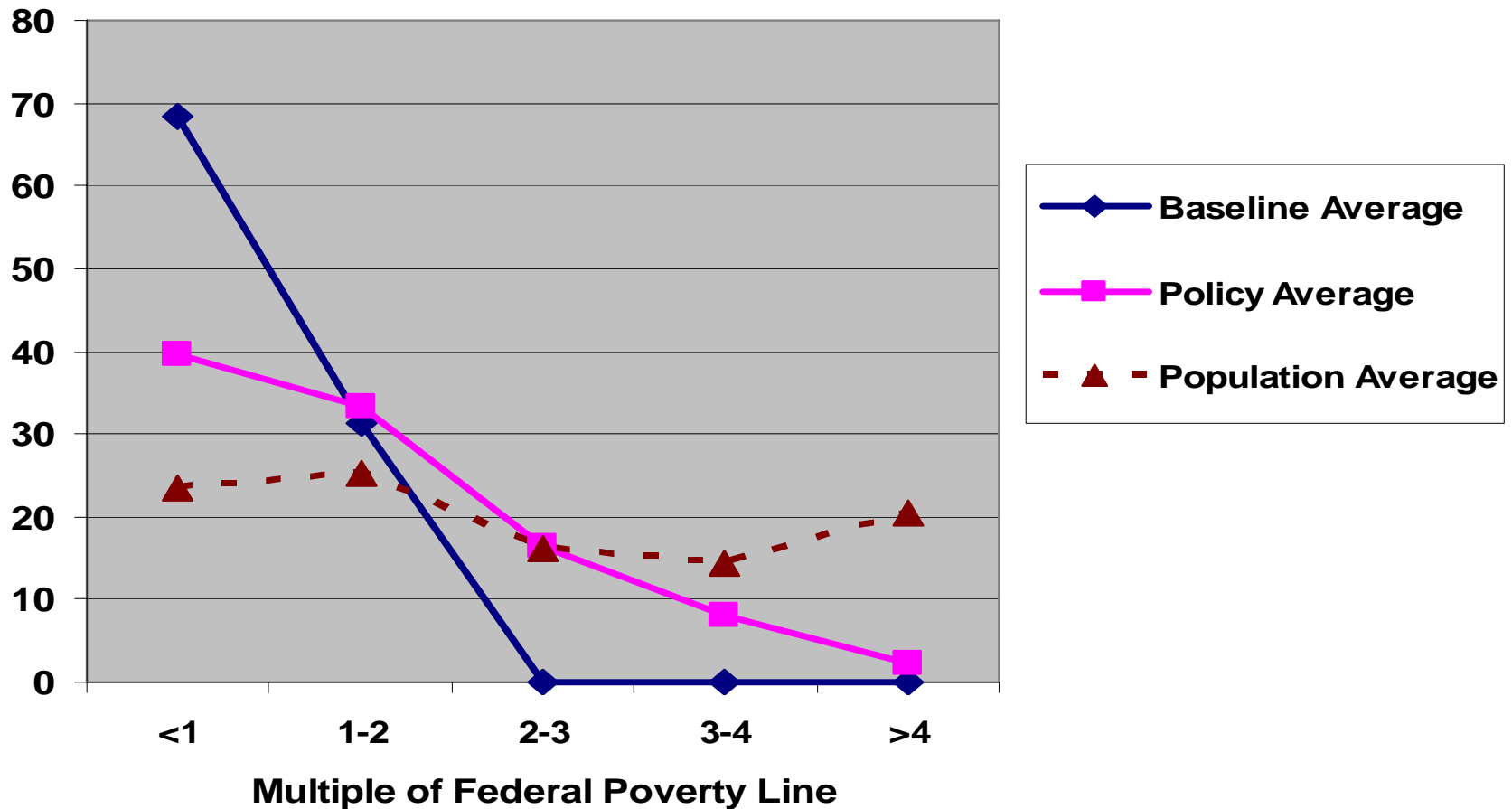
Targeting Funds to the  
Most Vulnerable Children

# Middle Income Affordability

- ❑ Center-type care not currently affordable; achievement gap.
- ❑ High quality ECE not affordable without assistance – 20-25% take-home pay
- ❑ If not affordable for middle income, cannot sustain price increases in market, system collapses.
- ❑ Free ECE for all highly affordable, very expensive.
- ❑ PPAP balances affordability, targeting, cost.  
Within 10% of family income for 2 children.

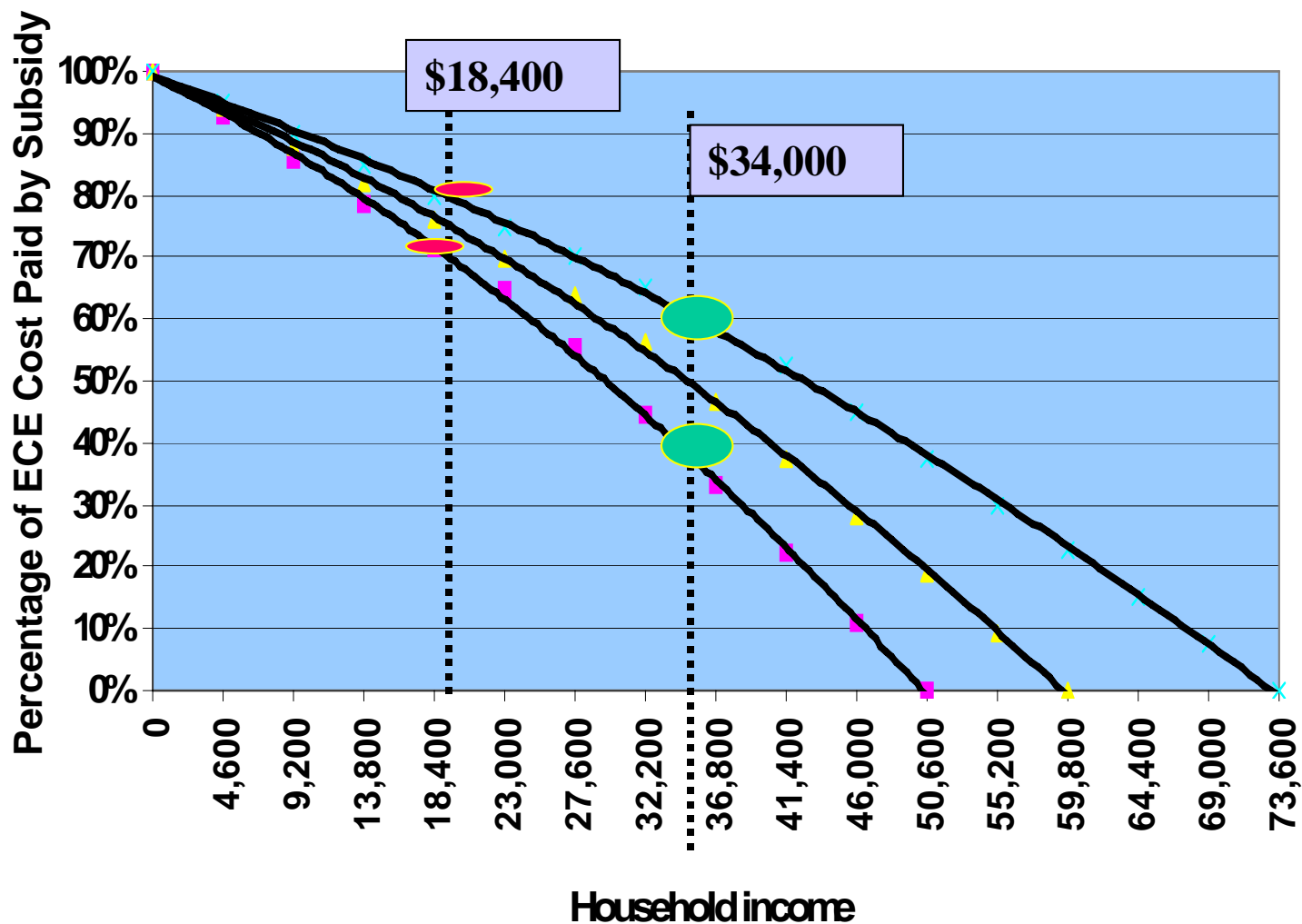
- ❑ Balance Middle Income Affordability vs. Targeting
- ❑ Different Shares of Larger Pie

**Percent Total Benefits, By Income Group,  
(Spending Only)**



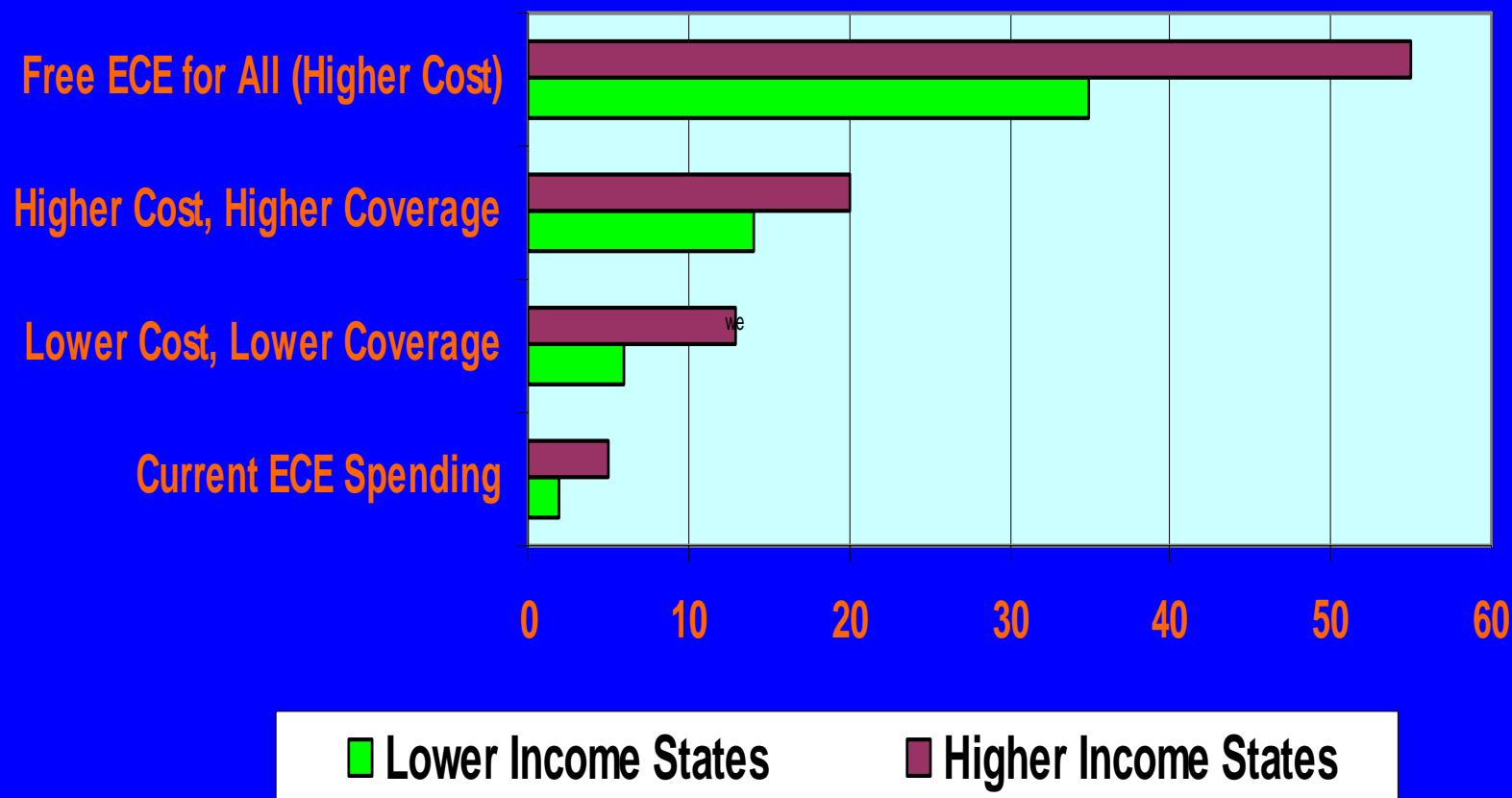


## Co-Payment Curves: Alternative Maximum Eligibility



## ❑ Feasible Solutions - at Higher/Lower Cost & Coverage

### ECE Subsidies as Percent K-12 Spending



Analyses for other states shows that  
with careful design,  
access to high quality early learning  
can be  
provided to all children  
age birth – five,  
at a moderate cost.



- Clear mission, leadership
  - Careful engineering
- Sustained public support

State and National Reports  
On Financing and Utilization  
Patterns (Survey Results)

Available

At

[www.hspsc.org](http://www.hspsc.org)